Foreword to the Special Issue on Chang Wen-huan

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Chang Wen-huan (1909-78), born in Taiping Village, Meishan Township, Chiayi County, is an important and influential writer of the Japanese period, whose works include fiction, essays, critiques, plays and cultural criticisms on folklore, popular music and the arts. After graduating from public elementary school in 1927 at the age of eighteen, he went to study at the Okayama High School in Japan, and transferred to the Department of Literature, Tōyō University, in 1931 at the age of twenty-two.

In 1933 while in Tokyo, Chang Wen-huan joined with Wu K’un-huang, Wang Pai-yuan, Wu Yung-fu and others, to found the Taiwan Geijutsu Kenkyūkai (Society for the Study of Taiwanese Arts), which published the literary magazine Forumosa [Formosa]; he was in charge of the second and third issues as the editor and published his first story, “Ochitsubomi” [Fallen Buds] in the second issue. In 1935 he joined the Tokyo branch of the ‘Taiwan Bungei Renmei (League of Taiwanese Literary Arts). His story, “Chichi no kao” [The Visage of My Father], received honorable mention in a literary contest sponsored by Chūō kōron [Central Review], and he began to publish his stories one after another in Taiwan bungei [Taiwan Literary Art] and Taiwan shin-bungaku [Taiwan New Literature]. In 1938 at the age of twenty-nine, he returned to Taiwan to assume the editorship in Japanese for the Fengyue bao [Wind-and-Moon Bulletin], in which he published his critiques, prose, and fiction and serialized his Japanese translation, “Kawaii kataki,” of the popular romance Ke’ai de chouren [Lovable Foes] by Hsu K’un-chuan.

In 1940 at the age of thirty-one, Chang Wen-huan joined with Nishikawa Mitsuru and Huang Te-shih to establish the Taiwan Bungeika Kyōkai (Association of Taiwanese Literary Artists). His novel, Sanzaka [Camellia], was serialized in the Taiwan shinmin hō [Taiwan New People’s Press], and he also published works in Taiwan geijutsu [Taiwan Arts] and Bungei Taiwan [Literary Art Taiwan]. In 1941 he founded the Keibun-sha (Literary Enlightenment Society) with Huang Te-shih, Wang Ching-chuan, Chen Yi-sung, Nakayama Susumu and others and launched the magazine Taiwan bungaku [Taiwan Literature] in order to offer an alternative to Bungei Taiwan, controlled by Nishikawa Mitsuru. He served as an editor of Taiwan bungaku, where he published his own stories, such as “Geidan no ie” [A Geisha’s House] and “Rongo to niwatori” [The Analects and the Chicken]. In 1942 at the age of thirty-three, he reached the peak of his creativity. In Taiwan bungaku he published “Yaen” [Night Monkeys], “Tongo” [Epiphany], and “Enkei” [The Capon], and at the same time his essays and critiques appeared in many other periodicals, such as Taiwan jihō [Taiwan Times], Bungei Taiwan [Literary Art Taiwan], Shin bunka [New Culture], Minzoku Taiwan [Folklore Taiwan], and Taiwan geijutsu [Taiwan Arts]. In October of the same year, together with Nishikawa Mitsuru, Hamada Hayao, and Lung Ying-tsung, he went to Tokyo to attend the first Greater East Asia Writers’ Convention. In February 1943, his “Night Monkeys” was selected for the first
“Taiwan Literature Award” by the Imperial Subjects’ Public Service Society. In September, he joined with Wang Ching-chuan, Lin Po-chiu, Lü He-jo, Lü Chuan-sheng, and Yang San-lang to establish the Kōsei Engeki Kenkyūkai (Society for the Promotion of Social Welfare Theater), and his fiction “The Capon” was adapted by the dramatist Lin Po-chiu as a stage drama that created a sensation. In December, in collaboration with the Imperial Subjects’ Movement, Taiwan Literature was forced to discontinue its publication and merged with Literary Art Taiwan as an organ of the Taiwan Literature Public Service Society under the name of Taiwan bungei [Taiwan Literary Art].

After the war, in February of 1946 at the age of thirty-seven, he was appointed by the Nationalist Government as the headman of Tali Township, and was elected the First Taichung County Council member. In 1947, implicated in the February 28th Incident, he fled to a mountainous area to take refuge. After the war, because of the stern political atmosphere and change of the official language, he stopped creative writing and cut himself off from literary circles. In the next year, he worked as an editor of Taiwan-sheng tongzhi [Taiwan Provincial Gazetteer], and later took up jobs in the insurance business, banking, and other private enterprises. In 1957 “A Geisha’s House” was adapted to film and renamed “Lamented Misty Flower.” He held a post as the general manager of the Sun Moon Lake Hotel.

In 1972 at the age of sixty-three, he used the sparetime to write his last novel in Japanese, entitled Chi ni hau mono [Those Crawling on the Ground], which was published in Japan in 1975 and was recommended by the Japan Books and Publications Association as “Best Book of Japan,” and its Chinese translation was rendered by Liu Ch’ing-hsiu as Gundilang, published in Taipei in 1976. In 1977 he tried to start another novel entitled “Cong shanshang wangjian de jiedeng” [Street Lights Seen from the Mountain], but left it unfinished when he passed away in 1978 because of heart disease at the age of sixty-nine. The Complete Works of Chang Wen-huan was published by the Taichung County Culture Center in 2002.

Chang Wen-huan is the most representative writer of the period under Japanese rule. As far as his creativity goes, as well as the quality and quantity of his works, and the influences he exerted at the time as a leading writer and editor of journals, he is an outstanding figure. The highlights of his literary activities and the characteristics of his works can be summed up as follows:

First, Chang Wen-huan’s creative talents are diverse. His literary activities during the colonial period last only twelve years, from 1933 when his first story “Fallen Buds” was published until 1945 when the war ended. According to the Complete Works of Chang Wen-huan (2002), his collected works comprise twenty-eight short stories and novellas, one novel, Camellia (another one, Those Who Crawl on the Ground, written in 1972), two plays (the stage drama The Capon and the movie Lamented Misty Flower adapted from “A Geisha’s House”), and two volumes of essays and miscellaneous writings. Although not prolific, his works include short stories, medium-length stories, novels, plays, critiques, criticisms, and translations; he wrote no poetry, however. He was outstanding among contemporary Taiwanese writers, and as far as the achievement of writing novels is concerned, he and Lung Ying-tsung deserve to be called great masters shining like a pair of jade stones in the literary world of the colonial period.

Second, Chang Wen-huan played a key role in the literary arena and his influence extended in three dimensions:
1) Although Chang Wen-huan’s early works were published in *Literary Art Taiwan* under the control of Nishikawa Mitsuru, who had official connections, his literary ideal and creative position were different, and therefore he and other Taiwanese writers launched the publication of *Taiwan Literature* to stand up to Nishikawa’s *Literary Art Taiwan*. Not a few of his important works were published in *Taiwan Literature*. He upheld Taiwanese ethnic consciousness, drew materials from Taiwan’s natural conditions and social customs, reflected life experiences in the mountain villages, and depicted the life and feelings of the local people in the countryside; in short, he presented a Taiwanese folk literature in a spirit of realism to contend with the overseas literature (*gaichi bungaku*) promoted by the colonizer with a tendency toward exoticism. Cheng Wen-huan deserves to be considered a leading writer and spiritual leader in the literary world of Taiwan during the colonial period.

2) In 1935 Chang Wen-huan’s story “The Visage of My Father” was awarded fourth place in a fiction contest sponsored by *Central View* in Tokyo. During the war period, under the political circumstances of colonial rule, Chang Wen-huan was one of the Taiwanese writers chosen, together with Nishikawa Mitsuru, Hamada Hayao, and Lung Ying-tsung, to represent the colony of Taiwan in the first Greater East Asia Writers’ Convention held in Tokyo in 1942. In 1943, his story “Night Monkeys” received the first literary award bestowed by the Imperial Subjects’ Public Service Society. This attention is evidence of his reputation and status in the literary world at that time, which were highly regarded by the colonial government.

3) In 1938 Chang Wen-huan took up the position of editor of the *Wind-and-Moon Bulletin* and published his Japanese translation of Hsü K’un-chuan’s popular fiction, *Lovable Foes*, which had been serialized in the *Taiwan New People’s Press* in 160 sections. Then in 1941 his novel *Camellia* was also serialized in the *Taiwan New People’s Press*, which was the mouthpiece of the Taiwanese during the period of Japanese rule, from January 23 to May 14, in 111 sections; with this, his position as a writer and his influence in the literary world were firmly established. The great reputation he had at that time can also be seen in the immediate sensation stirred when his story “The Capon” was adapted and performed on the stage as a tremendous success.

Third, regarding the characteristics of Cheng Wen-huan’s works, the critic Chang Heng-hao has made the following succinct observation:

In the cultural context, Chang Wen-huan has persistently maintained his ethnic standpoint, and in the practice of creative writing, he is a humanist. His humanistic sentiments are revealed explicitly in his works, while his national consciousness is concealed under the surface; the merging of nationalism and humanism is a distinct characteristic of his literary thought.” He further points out: “Most of his stories are centered on mountain villages in Meishan Township in Chiayi and build on Taiwanese customs and common feelings of the people, habits of life, and folk stories to depict the life attitudes and moral ideas of the country folk and common people living in the remote, quiet, hardworking, pure and simple, self-sufficient mountain villages, so as to explore the meaning of human existence, examine love and hatred, and the good and evil of human nature, unveil human dignity and responsibility, and honestly present the truth of life and the real situation of the society under the Japanese occupation….” (“Rendao guanhuai de fengsuhua” [Genre Painting with Humanistic Care], *Zhang Wenhuang ji* [Collected Works of Chang Wen-huan], Qianwei, 1991, P. 10.)
In addition, the critic Yeh Shih-t’ao has also pointed out:

The characteristics of Chang Wen-huan’s literature lie in his profound humanism. He believed that there are places in this world that lack ‘every condition for becoming human.’ To put it briefly, his concern is about the farmers indomitably rooted in the earth enduring a mistreated and bullied life. The style of Mr. Chang Wen-huan’s fiction is very close to naturalism as he emphasizes portraying Taiwanese family life and customs and habits year after year. In describing Taiwanese customs and habits in detail, he positively confirmed that the Taiwanese national cultural tradition is a culture distinct from that of the Yamato people, as irreconcilable as fire and water, therefore the sort of effort of the Japanese attempting to actuate an ‘Imperial Subjects Movement’ was a waste of time as it absolutely could not annihilate the Taiwanese national spirit. (“Zhang Wenhuan wenxue de tezhi” [The Characteristics of Chang Wen-huan’s Literature], *Taiwan xiantu zuojia lunji* [Critiques on Taiwanese Nativist Writers], Yuanjing Series 114, 1979, p. 106.)

Chang Wen-huan gave up writing in mid-career after the February 28th Incident for more than twenty years, until 1972 when he took up his pen once again to create another novel in Japanese, *Those Crawling on the Ground*, to express his feelings in the form of a “literary testament.” As he acknowledged, he himself was affected by the February 28th Incident and the white terror after the war, and those who survived had been “dragging out an ignoble existence, bearing on their backs a miserable shadow of a Taiwanese.” This magnum opus is his second novel, the only one published as a single volume before his death. It depicts, with a strong local color and smelling of mud, Taiwanese people’s way of life under Japanese colonial rule. This novel is also a great work of realism with an emphasis on the historical experience and social customs of the Taiwanese people, revealing the author’s humanistic concern and sympathy for the weak, who suffer and endure humiliation in their downtrodden life.

Let us now take a brief look in retrospect at the studies of the writer Chang Wen-huan and his works. Generally speaking, it was not until the late 1970s that writers of the new Taiwan literature during the period under Japanese rule were unearthed and their works in Japanese began to be translated into Chinese. This literature attracted particular attention with the appearance of *Guangfu qian Taiwan wenxue quanji* [Complete Works of Taiwan Literature before the Retrocession], 12 volumes, published by Yuanjing Publishers in 1979, and *Riju xia Taiwan xin wenxue* [New Taiwan Literature under Japanese Rule], published by Mingtan Publishers in the same year. The article “On the Characteristics of Chang Wen-huan’s Literature” by the critic Yeh Shih-t’ao, included in *Taiwan xiangtu zuojia lunji* [Critiques on Taiwanese Nativist Writers], was one of the earliest studies on Chang Wen-huan and was published in March 1979, after Chang Wen-huan had passed away more than a year earlier in February 1978. It was fourteen years later when *Zhang Wenhuan quanji* [Complete Works of Chang Wen-huan] was published by the Taichung County Culture Center in 2002. In other words, the study of Chang Wen-huan by scholars in Taiwan came much later than many other contemporary writers of the period under Japanese rule.

However, understanding and recognition of the importance of Chang Wen-huan as an outstanding writer of the colonial period has inspired scholars to work on him, entailing impressive research results in quality and quantity that have surpassed the studies on other contemporary writers, as evidenced in the volume on Chang Wen-huan, included in *Taiwan dangdai zuojia yanjiu ziliao huibian* [Collected Research Materials on Contemporary Writers of Taiwan], eds. Liu Shu-ch’in and Chang Wen-hsun, published by
the national Museum of Taiwan Literature in 2011. Included in the book, the article “Zhang Wenhuan yanjiu zong shu” [A Survey of the Studies on Chang Wen-huan] introduces Chang Wenhuan as “an eminent figure among Taiwanese writers writing in Japanese,” explains “the gradual revival of unearthed writers in the 1970s and their works,” and further makes a detailed account of “the development of research and critical studies of Chang Wenhuan in academia,” divided into two parts: in Japan and in Taiwan. To sum up, the articles on Chang Wenhuan published in periodicals and journals cover his early literary activities in connection with Formosa, published by the Society for the Study of Taiwanese Arts, and Taiwan Literary Art, sponsored by the Tokyo branch of the Taiwan Literary Art League, his role as the editor of the Wind-and-Moon Bulletin and Taiwan Literature, his propaganda activities for the Public Service Society, his administrative experiences at the end of the war and after the war, as well as his creative writing in the later years of his life. Regarding academic research, there are more than fifteen theses constituting studies of the author and his works: biographical studies, comparative studies, gender theories, and post-colonial studies. According to the summary comment of the editors, “As a whole, the studies of Chang Wenhuan in the last several decades embrace all kinds of issues and angles and take in subjects of diverse nature with surprising results. They not only provide a significant transnational theme in the study of Taiwan literature, they also confirm that Taiwan literature has marched from the field of folk culture into academic teaching and research, and demonstrated a trajectory of growth for Taiwan to gain a stronger foothold in the culture history and academic research history of East Asia.”

In a nutshell, Chang Wenhuan is an eminent writer of the period under Japanese rule and the characteristic features of his works are particularly distinctive in light of Taiwanese genre literature. His style of genre painting is subtle and vivid, and the undercurrent of his works is the social reality of Taiwan. The verbal expression of his works has a high level of artistic quality, and his subject matter also displays the eminence of world literature in exploring the meaning of human existence and human nature intertwined with love and hatred, good and evil. This special issue focuses on the author and introduces his representative works in English for the first time, and we hope that they will be appreciated by foreign readers as well.

In this issue, we have selected most of his important stories, except for his novels and the two short stories, “A Geisha’s House” and “Fallen Buds,” which, due to limited space and constraints of time, we will try to include in the next issue. From his earliest story “Fallen Buds” we can see the archetype of his fiction and concerns about the fate of women. “Rakkyō no tsubo”[The Scallions Jar] describes the daily life and feelings of the common people of the marketplace; the “Maigo” [The Lost Child] reveals the parental love and human nature of ordinary townsfolk. “A Geisha’s House” delineates the unfortunate life of an adopted daughter who became a geisha and her wishes for love. “The Capon” discloses the weakness of human nature and the tragic fate of a woman in the traditional society; “The Analects and the Chicken” describes the intrusion of Japanese modern culture and freedom in the mountain village, together with the hypocrisy of a pedantic schoolmaster and the decline of the traditional old-style tutorial school.

Needless to say, the many facets of Chang Wenhuan as a writer and of his works deserve even more scholarly attention hereafter. The publication of the Complete Works of Chang Wen-huan in 2002 has provided a favorable and feasible condition for further study and translation of his works. This journal has published one story and three essays by Chang Wen-huan, namely “Naichi yori kaerite” [Returning from Japan], “Kajū” [Overburdened], “Binrō no basuketto” [A Betel Nut Basket], and “Mazu liangliang de
qinshi” [The Marriage of Dame Mazu], in issues 2, 14, and 22, respectively. “The Capon” is the most successful and representative story by the author, which has now been exquisitely rendered by our English editor himself, and hopefully will be welcome and appreciated by our readers and scholars in the field alike. We are also thankful to Ms. Hsu Su-lan of the National Taiwan Museum for providing the original texts of Chang Wen-huan’s stories “Epiphany” and “The Lost Child” in Japanese. For this issue, we welcome Christopher Ahn and Patricia Welch to join our translation team with their hard work and valuable contributions. We are very grateful for the dedicated contributions and continued support of all translators, who have helped this journal, now in its fifteenth year, to advance from strength to strength with persistent efforts to promote Taiwan literature in English translation.